

Aquaculture without Frontiers



AwF-Nepal: Project Initiation Report

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This report covers major activities accomplished so far in Rainastar Village of Lamjung District, the selected site for an AwF-Nepal project which has been launched in collaboration with Rainastar Development Committee (RDC), a local NGO established with the purpose of developing the village as a “Model Village” in the district.

I. Project site:

The project site is located in mid-hills Nepal, approximately 150 km west of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. The project site has been recently connected with a muddy road where only big-wheelers can reach during the seasons when there is rainfall. During rainy season, people need to walk about an hour across a Marsyandi River from Baisjangan, a small town on a paved road that connects the district headquarters of Lamjung with a Kathmandu-Pokhara highway.

The district Lamjung covers an area of about 1,700 km² and has a population of about 180,000. Besisahar is its district headquarters. The main occupation of this district is agriculture. The project site, the Rainastar village is located at the lowest eastern part of the district embedded by two rivers named Marsyandi and Chepe. The land in the village is irrigated with the water diverted from Chepe River under Rainastar Irrigation Project. The diversion canal is operating since 1984 covering an area of over 500 hectare of land which will be the main source of water for fish ponds.



Fig. 1 Map of Nepal showing the location of the project site (Map source

II. Activities:

1. Awareness program

An awareness program was organized gathering a group of women in Mid-March using computer of a higher secondary school in the village. A program in CD produced based on the “Women in Aquaculture Project” in Chitwan was shown followed by questions and answers. Organizers were reporting that a lot of women showed their interest (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Fish culture - awareness program

2. Formation of women's group

The Rainastar Development Committee (RDC) made a public announcement about the project and asked interested women to apply with an application fee of NRs. 35 (~US\$0.5). Altogether 52 families have applied and showed interests in culturing fish in their lands which is almost double compared to the number the project team had expected. Full technical supports (training, field visit and fry supply) to all of them, and a partial financial support will be extended to all of them dividing them into two categories i.e. very poor and poor; with more supports to the former.

3. Feasibility study or Land Selection visit (April 14-17, 2008)

The project team comprising Dr. Ram C. Bhujel (Asian Institute of Technology), Dr. Madhav K. Shrestha (Institute of Agriculture and Animal Sciences, Rampur, Chitwan), Mr. Jiyun Chaudhary (Rural Integrated Development Society, Chitwan) and Mr. Hareram Devkota (IAAS, Student) along with RDC representatives (Mr. Baburam Chiluwal, Mr. Khagaraj Nakhola and Mrs. Sangita Chiluwal) visited almost all of the families (Fig. 3) who have applied to participate in the project, observed their lands set aside for digging ponds and also provided some suggestions on where and how to dig/manage a fish pond. A meeting with RDC committee was organized at the end of the visit in order to give guidance/suggestions and also make plans for demonstration trip, training, pond digging, stocking of fingerlings and so on.



Fig. 3 Project team observing the potential land for fish culture (left) and enthusiastic women to who are planning to participate (right).

4. Demonstration trip

A one-day demonstration trip to Kathar, Chitwan was organized on 26 April 2008 to make familiar with the activities and show the real functional fish ponds in ethnic Tharu community managed by women. All of the 50 women (plus 2 single men and RDC committee members) were included in the trip. Kathar is one of the most successful Women in Aquaculture project site initiated by AIT where women's group has been upgraded as "Women's Fish Farming Cooperative" which is the first fish farming cooperative of Nepal. It

is successfully running itself. Locals borrow money at the rate of 12% interest rate. The cooperative group was asked to prepare lunch (picnic) for them at a nominal rate as is the case for any visitors. This provides them an opportunity to save some amount of money for the cooperative and provide more time for interaction among them.

5. Training of women's group

The group was trained by Dr. Madhav Shrestha on the following day (27 April 2008) of the demonstration trip. They were explained on how to dig and prepare a pond, and stock fry, feed and take care afterwards (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Dr. Madhav K. Shrestha explaining about the pond construction.

6. Digging of pond – task ahead

The group has an ambitious target that all of the selected farmers will complete digging their ponds of recommended size of 100-200 m² depending upon their availability of land within Mid-May. Stocking of fingerlings will then be done after 2-3 weeks. Regular visit and monitoring will be carried out by Mr. Hareram Devkota who is an M. Sc. Aquaculture student at IAAS, Rampur, Chitwan and will be working as an intern with the women group.

III. Miscellaneous matters

Possibility of placing interns from European and American students or individuals (under EU Asia Link or AwF projects) was also discussed. The RDC committee was quite happy to host and provide free accommodation. The potential host for interns is Mr. Baburam Chiluwal, the current President of RDC, who is a retired school teacher. The host can prepare meals at nominal costs. There is a telephone service but no internet connection yet. The village has electricity supply, clean tap water for drinking and washing. But there is no hot water shower.